

Meeting Summary

Attendees: David Morgan – Town of Arlington (ARL)
Matthew Pilis, Duke Bitsko – Hatch
Project: Cooke's Hollow Feasibility Study and Concept Design Alternatives
Subject: Public Forum #1
Date: May 5, 2023

1. Sign-in Sheet Participants:

Marilyn Sullivan, Ellen Cohen, David White, Beth Melofchik, Steve Makowka, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Chris Ballman, Ann LeRoyer, Topher Heigham, Brian McBride, John Alessi, Karl Alexander, Nathaniel Stevens, Ellen Leigh, Keith Schnebly

2. Project Overview Provided:

Town provided project overview; Hatch provided team background and overview of project components.

3. Public Feedback:

3.1 - Site History

- a. Strong feeling historical significance should be factored into design.
- b. The site hosts the last of (9) dams that were once present in Arlington.
- c. The original park design won a national award.
- d. Native Americans have settled along the brook.
 - Nearby street is Sachem Avenue; Sachem - a North American Indian chief.
 - Consider a way to honor this historical aspect?
- e. The park is overseen by multiple parties within the Town of Arlington.
- f. One attendee noted that Old Schwamb Mill/website has relevant historical information.

3.2 - Sense of Space/Identity and Site Concerns

- a. Noted site uses:
 - Meditative/contemplative space.
 - A place to cool off in the summer (unique microclimate).
 - Running water/associated noise = favorite amenity.
 - Spectate/enjoy various wildlife (fish, birds, etc.).
 - Place to eat lunch or take a break during the workday.
 - Used as through way for recreation walks/walking dogs.
- b. Noted wildlife observed in the park:
 - Ducks, Heron, Jays, Possums, Racoons, Fish: White Sucker, River Herring, Blueback Herring.
- c. Menotomy Rocks Park/Spring Street entrance named as an example of "naturalistic" entrance.
 - Some like the seating area at entrance, others indicated stone benches rarely used and preference toward a more subdued entrance with seating inside the space.

- d. Noise from adjacent Eversource site a concern/problem; potential for “sound wall”, vegetative or sound attenuation wall – what is visual impact?
- e. At times planting “debris” from Cusack Terrace is dumped over the edge into the park.
- f. Flooding of Mill Brook – the brook frequently floods into the park, one attendee noted that it once flooded into the adjacent (police station) parking lot.
- g. Evening light pollution from the adjacent buildings; especially prevalent in winter.
- h. Snow dumping adjacent to the parking lot – no snow storage on conservation land.

3.3 - Accessibility and Connectivity:

- a. No curb cut/crosswalk at the park entrance.
- b. Only one public access to the park, at Mystic Street.
- c. The entirety of the park is not ADA accessible.
- d. Consider increasing path width.
- e. Potential to provide an ADA-compliant path (on-grade or ramp) addressing the steep slope adjacent to the high school athletic field and housing complex.
- f. Buzzell Field Park – directly adjacent to the Arlington Catholic Field.
 - Consider greater context/connectivity between surrounding green spaces.
 - Strong feedback that connection should be provided to Buzzell Field.

3.4 - Hardscape and Site Elements

- a. Trash receptacles: add an additional set of receptacles to minimize littering.
 - Potential access issue for pick up; ability to access through police station parking lot?
- b. Path material(s): suggestions to keep a similar organic looking material for the path.
 - Consider options for “natural” material that is ADA compliant.
- c. Light fixtures are broken and not aesthetically pleasing in character/design; as a Conservation Commission property, the park is technically open only from dusk to dawn.
 - Some observed site lighting may not be necessary due to excessive lighting from adjacent buildings.
- d. Fencing at the top of the dam is unattractive and may not be code-compliant.
- e. Multiple meeting attendees arrived on bikes and locked them up on a tree; future need for bicycle racks? Location(s)?
- f. Interpretive signage opportunities; explore sign options and reference existing planning documents.
- g. Wood on benches/picnic tables was recently replaced as part of an Eagle Scout project.

3.5 - Planting and Invasive Plant Management

- a. Opportunities to showcase native plant material in an urban space – potential for educational opportunity.
- b. Douglas Tallamy's book (*Bringing Nature Home*, 2007) identifies benefits of native plants to the greater ecology and wildlife habitat of the site echoed by many in the group.
- c. Plant screening toward the police station and the street would provide visual and act as a sound barrier to amplify sounds of the brook.
- d. Opportunity to utilize evergreen screening along the police station parking lot and the field edge of the site.

- e. Number of invasive plants is an issue/concern; volunteer removal of invasives active and much appreciated.
- f. Identify invasive tree canopy species/locations and prioritize a phased-removal approach.
- g. The Town recently cut down and pruned existing trees within the property, negatively impacted the sense of enclosure within the park.
 - ARL noted a fund for new tree planting within the park will be part of the new project.
- h. Several attendees would like to see plant ID tags on mature trees.
- i. The planting at the Mystic Street entry to the park is maintained by the Garden Club; opportunities for Garden Club to be involved with new plantings? Potential for plant installation or maintenance.
- j. For the past few years, girl scouts have volunteered to help remove invasive knotweed.
- k. One attendee identified and suggested planting some of the oldest living trees (globally) in this park (ginkgo, magnolia, etc.).
- l. Woodland understory planting options include – Native ferns, foamflower, white wood aster, spicebush, dogwood, witchhazel, etc....

3.6 - Future Town of Arlington Projects Identified:

- a. DPW upcoming projects include the bridge on Mystic Street and the adjacent police station parking lot.
 - The parking lot project will have bioretention basins and will remove overland flow from the parking lot across the park to the brook.
 - The bridge project will be rebuilt – it will no longer have central supports underneath the bridge which are currently affecting the water flow.

4. Next Steps

- a. Hatch to review public feedback with ARL.
- b. Hatch to prepare list of design element scope for the (2) alternate concept plans based on the public meeting feedback.
- c. Hatch to complete existing tree assessment and summary report.
- d. Hatch and ARL to coordinate upcoming schedule and next public forum date.

Cc: All attendees.